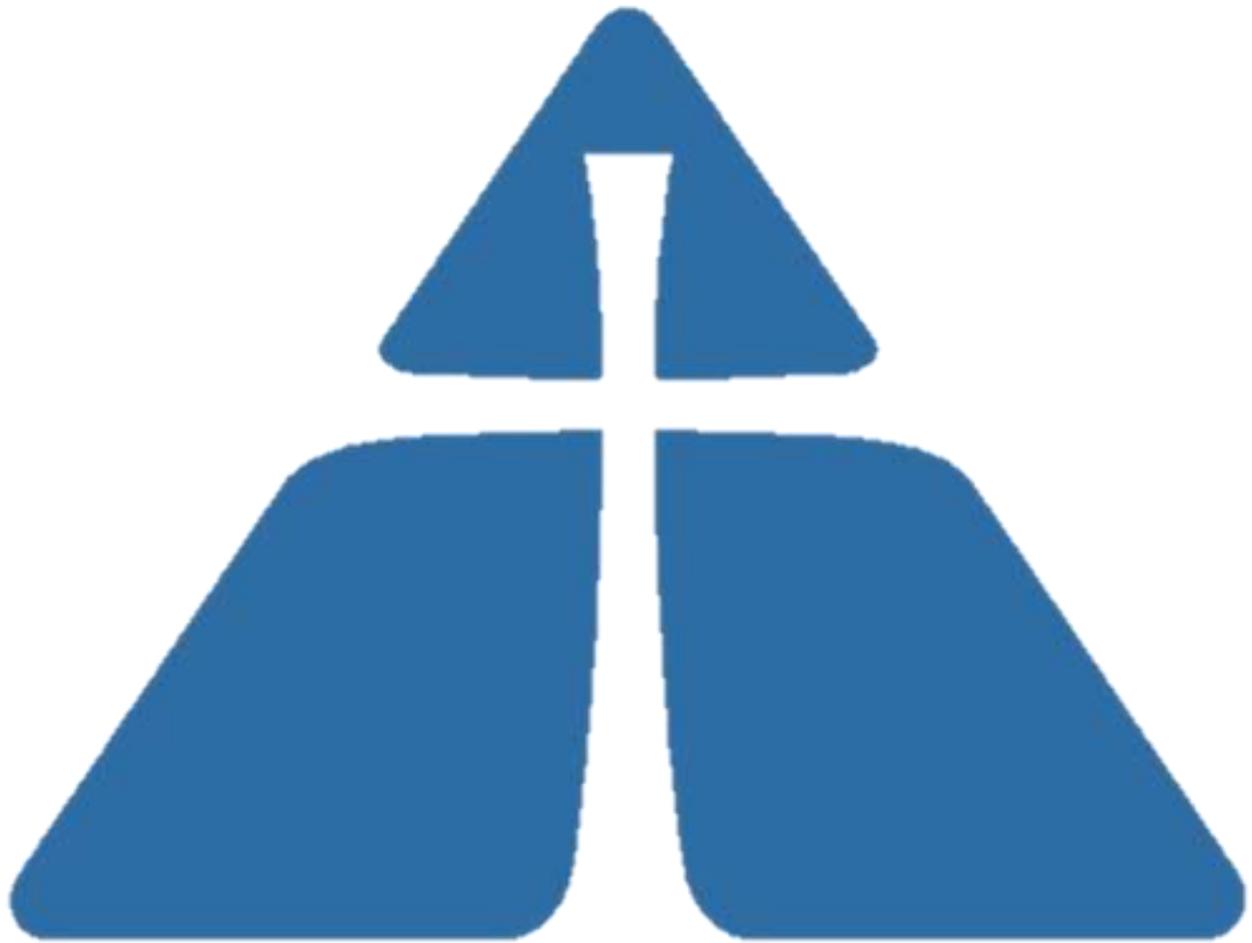


# TRINITY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH



## OFFICIAL BYLAWS

APPROVED AT ANNUAL MEETING ON MAY 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2015

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## MEMBERSHIP

### A. Description of Membership

The membership of the church shall consist of persons who profess belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; whose character, conduct and reputation conform therewith; and who will abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of this church.

### B. Admission

Any person desiring to become a member of this church shall meet the requirements for faith and conduct set forth in Article V of the Constitution of Trinity Church. Procedure for admission to membership shall be:

- Applicants for membership shall be eighteen (18) years of age, complete a membership application form, and submit it to the Elder Board
- The Elder Board shall publish the name of the applicant at least one Sunday prior to their interview for membership on the date set by the Elder Board. Any member with reason(s) for rejecting an applicant shall state in writing to the Elder Board his/her objections prior to the interview. The Elder Board shall then consider the validity of the objection.
- Following the publication of the applicant's name, the Elder Board shall choose at least three members of the Elder Board to conduct the interview of the applicant and to unanimously accept the qualified applicant into membership.
- The applicant shall be officially accepted into membership at a regular service in which he/she confesses his/her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each applicant shall also indicate publicly his/her intent to participate in the life of the church and to be under the Scriptural discipline of the church.
- Full-time Pastoral Staff members and their spouses shall automatically be members during their ministry at this church.

### C. Termination

Any member in good standing who moves to another locality and who wishes to join some other church shall upon request receive a letter of recommendation from this Congregation.

Members absent from the church for a period of one year shall be removed from the rolls after having been contacted in writing by the Elder Board prior to removal, unless the Elder Board decides to retain them.

Members found living contrary to the teachings of the Bible and the principles of this church shall be admonished by the Elder Board in brotherly love in accordance with Galatians 6:1, Hebrews 10:24-25, and Matthew 18:15ff.

Should a member continue to live in sin, the Elder Board may dismiss such a person from membership. Such a person, upon sincere repentance, may be reinstated to membership by the Elder Board. Any member who has withdrawn or been dismissed from membership has no rights in any business meeting or property of the church.

### D. Discipleship

Making disciples of Jesus Christ is the task of Trinity Church. We identify seven distinguishing traits of a maturing disciple:

- Love, for Jesus and for others; Matthew 22:37, John 15:12, and Matthew 5:44.
- Service, using gifts and abilities for God's glory; John 15:15, and I Corinthians 12:7.
- Scripture, study and meditation; John 15:7, and II Timothy 2:15.
- Prayer, personal and corporate; John 15:7, and I Timothy 2:1, 8.

- Verbal witness, telling unbelievers the good news; John 15:16, 27.
- Obedience, doing right and avoiding sin; John 15:9-10, and Matthew 5:6.
- Joy, from inner peace, faith and hope; John 15:11, and Philippians 4:4.

While we recognize that God works in our lives both individually and corporately and that all of us are at different places in our discipleship, our sincere desire is for everyone associated with Trinity Church to be maturing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## E. Responsibilities of Members

Members of Trinity Church are expected to:

- Strive toward a personal goal of being a mature disciple of Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 13:11, and Philippians 3:12.
- Participate in the ministry activities that are designed to help contribute to Christian disciple making such as: worship, small groups, Christian education, giving, prayer, evangelism, Congregational meetings, and using their spiritual gifts. Acts 2:42-47, and Hebrews 10:25.
- Submit to the spiritual authority of the church leaders. Hebrews 13:17.
- Resolve conflicts within the church in a Biblical manner. Romans 12:18; Galatians 5:14-15.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The New Testament holds out two central ministry functions and offices which help define the church itself. Other ministries will come and go based on given circumstances, but these remain central for our viability as a Christian church. They are Biblical shepherding (including teaching, leading and praying) represented by the presence of Biblically qualified Elders (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9) and Biblical care represented by the presence of Biblically qualified Deacons/Deaconess' (Acts 6:1-7, I Timothy 3:8-13).

### A. Our Authority Structure

Our Authority Structure stated.

- The final responsibility for all matters relating to the life and ministry of Trinity Church shall be with the members of the church.
- The Elder Board, Diaconate and other elected ministry leaders must be members and exist to serve the church in specific and complimentary areas.
- The Diaconate and other ministry leaders all fully respect, and defer to, the spiritual oversight and authority of the Elder Board.
- All Pastoral Staff and elected leaders are considered servants of Trinity Church and are accountable to its members for all service done on behalf of the church. Pastoral Staff and elected leaders are accountable to the Elder Board.

## ELDERS<sup>1</sup>

Though the practical administration of the church's ministry is invested in its elected and appointed leaders, we recognize the spiritual oversight and shepherding of the Congregation to rest with the Elder Board. In accordance with Scripture, recognized Elders are entrusted with a noble task (I Timothy 3:1) of responsible, eager, and exemplary spiritual oversight of all individuals and ministries in the local church (I Peter 5:2ff). Such men are called by God to give themselves

<sup>1</sup> Standard operating procedures, structure, responsibilities and objectives for the Elder Board are detailed in the Elder Board Responsibility and Objectives Policy

proactively to shepherd God's people, proclaim the whole will of God, keep watch over the flock and be on their guard against those who would distort the truth (Acts 20:25-31). In as much as the Elders remain faithful to teach and lead the church in accordance with the Bible, God's people are called to respect them and submit to their authority, following their guidance so as to make their work a joy and not a burden (Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13).

## A. Elder Qualifications

- Elders shall be men at least thirty (30) years of age meeting the spiritual requirements for leadership as stated in I Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:4 and I Peter 5:2-5. In addition, all nominees shall be in agreement with the EFCA Statement of Faith. (Members and leaders at Trinity Church are not required to affirm Premillennialism.)
- Only active, resident voting members may be eligible for Eldership. No member shall be eligible for an elected position until they have been a regular attender of this church for at least one (1) year.
- No person may simultaneously serve as an Elder and another elected position in the church.
- Eligible candidates shall be those whose private and public lives conform to the qualities set forth in such passages as Romans 12:1-2, I John 3:16-18, Psalm 15, II Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:13-26, Ephesians 4:22-32, 5:1-28, Philippians 2:1-5, 3:7-11, Colossians 3:5-10, I Peter 2:1, 3:7-9, and 5:2-3. In addition they shall be those who have a demonstrable track record of Godly leadership in the church of Jesus Christ, not least an increasing desire to proactively help unbelievers know Christ and believers grow in His grace.
- Men who have spent at least one year in the Elder Discipleship Process may be considered for Congregational affirmation as a Trinity Church Elder.<sup>2</sup>

## B. Elder Discipleship and Selection

- The Church Secretary shall ask the members of the Congregation quarterly to present suggestions of men who, in their estimation, meet the qualifications of a Biblical Elder. Members will be asked to present their suggestions in writing, filling out a prescribed form delineating such qualifications. The Elder Board will prayerfully evaluate and screen the suggested candidates according to the Elder qualifications listed above.
- The Elder Board will spend time developing and prayerfully discerning the readiness of the candidate to serve as Elder, finally presenting any number of former Elders and Elder nominees for affirmation at the Annual Meeting. A potential Elder must be in this process for a minimum of one (1) year before being presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting to be affirmed as an Elder.
- In order to provide a manageable Elder Board and continuity in leadership, the goal is to have an Elder Board consisting of eight (8) Elders and with no more than two (2) Elders rotating off the board each year. Each Elder candidate under consideration for election at a Congregational Meeting must receive at least eighty percent (80%) of the votes cast. Those newly elected/affirmed shall begin service on the first of the month following the Annual Meeting.

## C. Elder Board Composition and Organization

Although it is the desire of Trinity Church always to maintain an Elder Board consisting of the Lead Pastor and no less than three (3) Elders elected from the Congregation, in light of the necessary qualifications revealed by the Bible, Trinity Church agrees to wait for God to supply qualified candidates rather than lower the standard of the office.

The term of office for Elders shall be three (3) years. Elders shall be limited to two (2) consecutive terms followed by at least one (1) year off the Elder Board. After one (1) year, a qualified Elder is eligible to be considered for election to additional service on the Elder Board.

In the event of Elder Board decisions, no vote shall be taken until all presently serving Elders have been amply informed and have had opportunity to consider the matter in prayer, study, and contribute to the discussion. Since the purpose of

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<sup>2</sup> If Deacons/Deaconess' were required to be tested in Paul's day (I Timothy 3:10), how much more important is a period of training/testing for Elders!

the Elder Board is to discern the Lord's will and oversee the ministries of the church for the Congregation's care, the Elders shall work toward unanimity in spirit and consensus in decision (Philippians 1:27, Ephesians 4:2-6). A majority vote shall be required for an action to be carried out.

The Lead Pastor will preside over all regular and special Congregational meetings as a voting member of the Congregation and will preside over all regular and special Elder Board meetings as a voting member of the Elder Board.

In the case where the Lead Pastor is absent, unable to serve, or there is conflict of interest, the Elder Board meetings will be led by the **Lay Chairman of the Elder Board** who is appointed at the first meeting of the year.

**The Spokesperson of the Elder Board** will be elected by the Congregation as they affirm the Elders. The Elder receiving the most votes for Spokesperson at the Annual Meeting will then be affirmed at the first Elder Meeting of the year. This allows the Elder to respectfully decline if he is unable to fulfill this role. The next highest vote recipient will then be considered/affirmed.

The Spokesperson of the Elder Board will serve as a line of communication between the Congregation and the Elder Board. Suggestions, agenda item requests, or communications of this nature, may be submitted to the Elder Board through the Spokesperson.

The Spokesperson of the Elder Board will submit an annual report to the Annual Meeting on behalf of the Elder Board.

**Quorum:** Fifty percent (50%) of the members of the Elder Board shall constitute a quorum for Elder Board meetings.

The Elders shall appoint up to three (3) members from their board to serve as delegates to the annual Northern Plains District Convention.

## D. Elders' Relationship to Other Ministry Categories

### **Relationship with the Deacons/Deaconess':**

- Casting the diaconal vision and create any positions needed on the Diaconate to meet temporal needs.
- Delegating temporal, crisis, and other care needs to the Deacons/Deaconess'
- Advising the Deacons/Deaconess' in unusually complex cases of care
- A Pastor or Elder may serve as an official Elder representative to the Deacons/Deaconess'

### **Relationship with secondary ministry leaders:**

- Cast the broad vision and generally define the philosophy of ministry for each ministry category in keeping with the vision/philosophy of ministry at Trinity Church
- Delineate specific ministry goals to certain secondary ministries when needed
- Advise leaders on locating/training/discipling future secondary ministry leaders

### **Relationship with the Congregation:**

- Proactively initiating contact with Small Group leaders in an effort to know and provide for specific shepherding needs
- Seek to identify and disciple potential Elders

## PASTORAL STAFF MEMBERS

The Pastoral Staff shall carry out specific areas of ministry under the direction of the Lead Pastor and Elder Board and shall strive "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry."

Job descriptions with administrative arrangements for the Pastoral Staff shall be negotiated and maintained by the Elders and/or Executive Pastor and shall include qualifications, responsibilities, and lines of accountability. All job descriptions

shall be available to all members upon request. Ninety (90) days of notice is preferred when terminating employment by either party unless other terms are mutually agreed upon with the Congregation.

The Pastoral Staff are to provide spiritual, preaching, and teaching leadership for the church in the discharge of the functions of the ministry. They are to make their aim the "equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

In the exercise of this divine purpose, the Pastoral Staff shall be men who meet the Biblical qualifications for Elder as set forth in I Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:4, and I Peter 5:2-5.

The Lead Pastor shall automatically be an Elder, serving as a voting member and theological, visionary leader of the Elder Board. Pastoral Staff, although meeting the Biblical qualifications, may or may not be asked by the Elders to serve on the Elder Board. The Elders will clarify at Annual Meeting which Pastoral Staff will be reporting or active members of the Elder Board.

The Pastoral Staff shall be accountable to the Elder Board and ultimately to the Congregation. They shall report to the Elder Board at their meetings and to the Congregation at its annual business meeting. They shall be evaluated annually by the Pastoral Staff Review Team and Elder Board.

#### A. Pastoral Search Committee

The purpose of the Search Committee shall be to bring the most qualified applicant for the position to the Congregation for consideration.

The Search Committee will be appointed by the Elders and affirmed by the Congregation and will consist of at least two lay members of the Elder Board.

The Search Committee shall elect its own chairperson. The Search Committee may consider input from other Pastoral Staff and will maintain good communication with the Congregation during the process.

This Search Committee's candidate is interviewed by the Elder Board and must be finally approved by a unanimous vote of the Elder Board before being presented to the Congregation.

The name of the approved candidate shall come before the Congregation for election at a business meeting. The candidate must be approved by no less than eighty percent (80%) of the members present.

#### B. Pastoral Staff Review Team

The Pastoral Staff Review Team shall consist of the Lead Pastor, the Executive Pastor, the Church Administrator, minimum of one lay Elder (preferably two (2)), and a female member appointed by the Elder Board.

This team will conduct annual reviews of all Pastoral Staff and submit their report to the Elder Board for final review and decisions on any recommendations.

### DIACONATE (BOARD OF DEACONS & DEACONESS')

Standard operating procedures, structure, responsibilities and objectives for the Deacons/Deaconess' are detailed in the Diaconate Responsibility and Objectives Policy.

The Deacon/Deaconess is nominated and affirmed by the Congregation to ensure leadership and oversight in the temporal ministry needs of the church.

#### A. Diaconate Qualifications

- Men or women exhibiting the character qualities of Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.

- Only active, resident voting members may be eligible as Deacons. No member shall be eligible until they have been a regular attender of this church for at least one year. The Elder board will create positions on the Diaconate as needed.

## B. Diaconate Selection

- The Church Secretary shall ask the members of the Congregation quarterly to present suggestions of men or women who, in their estimation, meet the qualifications of a Biblical Deacon. Members will be asked to present their suggestions in writing, filling out a prescribed form delineating such qualifications. The Elder Board will prayerfully evaluate and screen the suggested candidates according to the Diaconate qualifications listed above.
- The Elder Board will spend time developing and prayerfully discerning the readiness of the candidate to serve as Deacon/Deaconess, finally presenting any number of former Deacons/Deaconess' and nominees for affirmation at the Annual Meeting. A potential Deacon/Deaconess must be in this process for a minimum of one (1) year before being presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting to be affirmed as a Deacon/Deaconess.
- In order to provide a manageable Diaconate and continuity in leadership, the goal is to have a Diaconate consisting of eight (8) Deacons/Deaconess' and with no more than two Deacons/Deaconess' rotating off the board each year. Each Deacon/Deaconess candidate under consideration for election at a Congregational Meeting, must receive at least eighty percent (80%) of the votes cast. Those newly elected/affirmed shall begin service on the first of the month following the Annual Meeting.
- The gender composition of the Diaconate, guided by the Elder Board, shall ensure men are upholding their roles of leadership in the church.
- A Deacon/Deaconess may be single, widowed, or married.

## C. Deacon Board Composition and Organization

Although it is the desire of Trinity Church always to maintain an Diaconate consisting of the pastor charged with oversight by the elders and no less than three (3) Deacons/Deaconess' elected from the Congregation, in light of the necessary qualifications revealed by the Bible, Trinity Church agrees to wait for God to supply qualified candidates rather than lower the standard of the office.

The term of office for Deacons/Deaconess shall be three (3) years. Deacons/Deaconess shall be limited to two (2) consecutive terms followed by at least one (1) year off the Diaconate. After one (1) year a qualified Deacons/Deaconess is eligible to be considered for election to additional service on the Diaconate.

The Diaconate meetings will be led by the overseeing pastor or Diaconate Chairman whom will be appointed at the first meeting.

**The Spokesperson of the Diaconate** will be elected by the Congregation as they affirm the Diaconate. The Deacons/Deaconess receiving the most votes for Spokesperson at the Annual Meeting will then be affirmed at the first Diaconate Meeting of the year. This allows the Deacons/Deaconess to respectfully decline if he/she is unable to fulfill this role. The next highest vote recipient will then be considered/affirmed.

The Spokesperson of the Diaconate will serve as a line of communication between the congregation and the Diaconate. Suggestions, agenda item requests, or communications of this nature, may be submitted to the Diaconate through the Spokesperson.

The Spokesperson of the Diaconate will submit an annual report to the Annual Meeting on behalf of the Diaconate.

**Quorum:** Fifty percent (50%) of the members of the Diaconate shall constitute a quorum for Diaconate meetings.

The Diaconate shall appoint up to three (3) members from their board to serve as delegates to the annual Northern Plains District Convention.

## D. Deacons' Relationship with Other Ministry Categories

### **Relationship with the Elders:**

- Looking to the Elders for vision, spiritual authority, and delegation of temporal needs of the church.
- Looking to the pastor charged with oversight as an official Elder representative
- Regularly reporting to the Elders significant instances of financial assistance provided and specific shepherding needs which their ministry reveals

### **Relationship with Congregation and other ministry leaders:**

- Availability to leaders with knowledge of significant care needs within their area of ministry
- Regularly initiate contact with and train Small Group Care Coordinators
- Seek to identify and disciple potential Deacons/Deaconess'

## LEADERSHIP NOMINATING PROCESS

The procedure for nominations shall be as follows:

The Church Secretary shall distribute Elder and Deacon/Deaconess nomination forms to the members of the Congregation at least four (4) times a year to be signed and turned into the Church Secretary or an Active Elder.

The Church Secretary shall submit the list of nominees to the Elder Board for their prayerful consideration. If the Elder Board knows of some Biblical evidence disqualifying one or more of the individuals, an Elder will notify the person who submitted the nomination and inform them that the nomination has been declined. Then, an Elder will notify the nominee and use this opportunity to provide Pastoral leadership/teaching to the nominee regarding the reasons for the Elders' decision.

The Church Secretary will contact the Elder Board-approved candidates, review the responsibilities of the position, answer any questions the candidate may have, and ask if they would be willing to serve in the position in question. If the nominee accepts the nomination, the Church Secretary will arrange an interview of the Elder/Deacon candidates by the respective boards.

Two (2) weeks prior to the Annual Meeting, the Church Secretary will present a final ballot of approved nominees to the office staff to publish to the membership.

The ballot of nominees formulated by the Elder Board shall be published and publicly announced at least one (1) week prior to the Annual Meeting.

## REMOVAL FROM OFFICE OF ELECTED LEADERS AND MINISTERIAL STAFF

Elected church leaders and ministerial staff may be removed from office for reasons related to doctrine or conduct only after the proper exercise of church discipline in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17 and/or I Timothy 5:19-20.

No accusation shall be made by the Congregation nor entertained by the Elder Board against elected leaders or Pastors except by written complaint of at least two (2) witnesses (I Timothy 5:19).

A two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote of the members present and voting at a Congregational Business Meeting is required to dismiss an elected leader or Pastor when the issue is before the church. In some circumstances, the Elders may decide to remove the leader without a Congregational vote, especially in regards to Biblically disqualified Pastors, Deacons, or Elders.

## SECONDARY MINISTRY FORMS

No organization shall be formed with in or considered to be a part of the church activities before the sponsors have submitted their plans to the Elder Board for their approval and sanction.

The various organizations are requested to confer with the Executive Pastor from time to time regarding their plans and activities, and to submit copies of their minutes to the Elder Board regularly. All matters of importance which affect the church shall be submitted to the Elder Board for approval in advance.

No organization shall be permitted to function under the name of Trinity Church whose supervisor is not a member of Trinity Church.

## ADMINISTRATION TEAM

The Administration Team serves as part of the Diaconate and is philosophically guided by the Elders in an effort to organize and administer, strengthen and maintain the physical and financial integrity of the ministry of Trinity Church. In performing these functions the Administration Team, shall have among its members:

- Administrator (elected for a three (3) year term)
- Secretary (elected for a three year (3) term)

## TRINITY CHURCH MEETINGS

### A. Services

The Congregation may hold such services as it may decide.

### B. Annual Congregational Business Meeting

An Annual Business Meeting shall be held in the month of April<sup>3</sup>. Annual reports of the Pastoral Staff, the Elder Board, the Deacon Board and Administrator shall be printed and made available at least one (1) week prior to the meeting date. Any business, that concerns the work for the year, shall also be transacted at the Annual Meeting. The agenda for the Annual Congregational Business Meeting shall be printed and made available at least one week prior to the meeting date.

The ballot of nominees shall be published and publicly announced at least one (1) week prior to the annual meeting.

A Secretary shall be elected for a three (3) year term. He/she shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings and decisions at all business meetings of the Congregation. He/she shall preserve the records of the church and keep an accurate record of the church membership and shall execute all necessary correspondence pertaining to the business of the church. He/she will serve on the Administration Team.

### C. Annual Congregational Budget Meeting

An Annual Budget Meeting shall be held in the month of November. Proposed Budget reports shall be printed and made available at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting date.

### D. Special Congregational Business Meetings

Special business meetings of the Congregation may be called at any time by the Elder Board. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the church membership may also call a business meeting through a letter to the Elder Board. The purpose of all special business meetings must be announced to the Congregation publicly one (1) week prior to the date of the meeting. Only such matters as have been announced may be taken up for consideration and decision.

### E. Quorum

A quorum for any business meeting of the Congregation shall be **thirty percent (30%)** of the resident members. Fifty percent (50%) of the members of the Elder Board shall constitute a quorum for Elder Board meetings.

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<sup>3</sup> As voted on June 1, 2008 by the Congregation.

## F. Order of Business for the Annual Meeting

**The annual Congregational Business meeting shall include an opportunity for:**

- The reading of God's Word and prayer.
- Minutes of the previous meeting to be read and approved.
- Reports from the Elder Board and Deacon Board.
- Reports from the other Pastoral Staff and ministry leaders.
- Decisions on undecided, unfinished, or tabled business.
- Election of Elders, Deacons, and other elected leaders.
- Election of those committees the Congregation deems presently necessary (e.g. Search, Financial Review, etc.).

**New business for discussion:**

- First, that which is occasioned by the reports from the Elder Board, Deacon Board and other elected leaders.
- Second, that which may be proposed by members at the meeting.
- Closing prayer.
- The rules of order contained in Robert's Rules of Order (revised) shall govern this organization's meetings when it is consistent with Scripture, its Constitution, and Bylaws.

## G. Voting

- Nominations for the Elder and Deacon Boards are not permitted from the floor.
- All members are eligible to vote in all matters of business.
- All matters shall be determined by a majority of those members present and voting except when otherwise specified in these Bylaws. The chairman of the meeting may exercise discretion as to the precise procedure of voting on a particular issue unless any voting member present requests a written ballot.
- It is the desire of the Congregation that elections for ministry bodies operate in such a way to promote incremental inclusion and retirement.

## AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

The Lead and/or Executive Pastor will conduct an annual review of the Bylaws with the Administration Board and work with the selected/elected leaders to propose any necessary changes in writing to the Elder Board.

Any proposed amendments to these Bylaws must be submitted in writing to the Executive Pastor and/or Administrator, who will then submit them to the Elder Board, who, at its discretion, may propose them to the Congregation. The proposed amendments must be published and publicly announced one week prior to the officially-called business meeting of the Congregation in which the amendment is to be considered. A **two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ )** affirmative vote of the members present and voting at this meeting shall be necessary to ratify the amendment as part of these Bylaws.

## FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year shall begin on January 1<sup>st</sup> and end on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.